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Sustainable development: Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the small island developing States units of the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/217, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-third session, on an exceptional basis, without setting a precedent and within existing resources, a transparent and clearly substantiated needs assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the relevant programmes and subprogrammes of the Secretariat and to ensure the allocation of the resources required to adequately respond to the mandates in support of the sustainable development agenda of the small island developing States.

* A/73/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

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I. Introduction

1. Guided by its commitment to strengthen United Nations support for the sustainable development of small island developing States, including in the context of the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the General Assembly, in its resolution 69/217, requested the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to make recommendations in order to facilitate the determining of the parameters for a comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States. In response, JIU issued a first report in March 2015 (JIU/REP/2015/2), in which it highlighted 10 key findings and 6 recommendations on the parameters of a comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States. Principal among those findings was the recognition of a mismatch between the limited resources allocated to and the growing mandates of the units focused on small island developing States of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. JIU recognized that the limited number of staff in those two units did not allow for the fulfilment of expanding mandates and, therefore, recommended that the General Assembly ensure that a comprehensive review be conducted to evaluate the current allocation of resources, as well as their effective and efficient use, at the Headquarters of the United Nations Secretariat, with a view to improving governance and effective coordination in the delivery of the mandates given by the General Assembly to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative to support small island developing States.

2. Echoing its first report, in its 2016 report on the subject (JIU/REP/2016/3), JIU noted that "the workload of both Units increased overtime without a commensurate increase in their resources. It is advisable that ... Member States enhance resources to the SIDS Units so as to better equip them to respond to the increased workload", and recommended that "the General Assembly, based on a transparent and clearly substantiated needs assessment prepared by the United Nations Secretariat, should consider the needs resulting from the evolving mandates given to the Secretariat's programmes and subprogrammes and ensure the allocation of resources required to adequately respond to the mandates in support of the sustainable development agenda of SIDS".

3. Taking note of the findings and recommendations of the JIU review of United Nations support for small island developing States, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/217, requested the Secretary-General to submit a transparent and clearly substantiated needs assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the relevant programmes and subprogrammes of the Secretariat and to ensure that the resources required were adequately allocated to respond to the mandates in support of the sustainable development agenda of the small island developing States.

4. The present report is submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 72/217. Section II reviews and identifies the Secretariat's[1] expanded mandates, work programme and activities. Section III examines the allocation of resources. Section IV identifies gaps and needs. Section V summarizes the findings and sets forth recommendations on the way forward.

[1] The "Secretariat" in this context refers to the units focused on small island developing States in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and in the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

II. Expanded mandates

A. Establishment of the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

5. In 1994, in the outcome document of the first global conference on small island developing States,[2] States Members of the United Nations observed that "it is essential for the follow-up to the Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action that a clearly identifiable, qualified and competent entity within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat be put in place to provide secretariat support for both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms". To that end, and in response to the above, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish such an entity within the then Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.[3]

6. In 1995, the Secretary-General reported and confirmed the establishment of such an entity.[4] In 1996, the Assembly underscored the importance of maintaining the Small Island Developing States Unit within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and repeated its request to the Secretary-General to maintain the Unit at an appropriate level of staffing and to improve the structure and organization of the Unit, in accordance with resolution 49/122.[5] In 1997, the restructured Small Island Developing States Unit was made part of the Division for Sustainable Development in the then newly renamed Department of Economic and Social Affairs.[6] This initiative was subsequently reported to, noted and welcomed by the Assembly.[7] The Unit has since remained a "clearly identifiable, qualified and competent entity" within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, reporting directly to the Director[8] of the now renamed Division for Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Mandates of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

7. In the outcome document of the first global conference, Member States recommended the creation of an entity that would fulfil the following functions:[9]

(a) Provide substantive secretariat support for intergovernmental and inter-agency processes related to the monitoring, review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action;

(b) Act as a liaison and focal point for Governments, organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on matters related to the follow-up to the Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action;

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[2] A/CONF.167/9, A/CONF.167/9/Corr.1 and A/CONF.167/9/Corr.2.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 49/122, para. 15.

[4] See A/50/422, para. 5.

[5] See Assembly resolution 51/183, para. 2.

[6] See A/52/319, para. 20.

[7] See Assembly resolution 52/202, para. 2.

[8] With the exception of a brief period from 2016 to 2017, when the Unit reported to the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals through then Chief of the SIDS, Oceans and Climate Branch.

[9] See A/CONF.167/9, para. 123.

(c) Prepare reports to be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development, and other relevant bodies, on the implementation of the Programme of Action, drawing on the inputs from all appropriate sources;

(d) Provide support, as appropriate, to other activities emanating from the Programme of Action.

8. In addition to the above-mentioned core functions and the additional tasks prescribed by the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Programme of Action),[10] in subsequent years, the General Assembly, through additional requests, expanded the responsibilities of the Secretariat, including the monitoring of and reporting on additional specified priority areas with respect to small island developing States, which require further focused attention. The Assembly has also repeatedly requested the Secretariat to report on the implementation of its annual resolutions.

9. Table 1 below provides an indication of the additional responsibilities that have been conferred upon the Secretariat by the Assembly in the years following the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action.[11] Of the 37 additional mandates indicated, 13 are ongoing.

Table 1

	Additional mandates		
Year	*Document*	*Number of additional mandates*	*Status*
1994 (Barbados Programme of Action)	A/CONF.167/9 (paras. 118, 119, 128 and 135)	5	Completed
1995–1999	Resolution 50/116 (paras. 9, 10 and 12)	3	Completed
	Resolution 51/183 (paras. 11 and 14)	2	
	Resolution 52/202 (para. 7)	1	
	Resolution 53/189A (paras. 12 and 14)	2	
	Resolution 54/224 (para. 2)	1	
1998	Resolution S-22/2, enclosure[a]	1	Ongoing
2000–2004	Resolution 58/213 (paras. 17, 22 and 23)	3	Completed
2005 (Mauritius Strategy)[b]	A/CONF.207/11 (paras. 101 and 102)	2	Ongoing
2005–2009	Resolution 64/199 (paras. 6 and 7)	2	Completed
2010–2014	Resolution 65/2 (paras. 32 and 33)	2	Competed
	Resolution 65/156 (paras. 2 and 12)	2	
	Resolution 67/207 (para. 11)	1	
	Resolution 68/238 (para. 12)	1	
	Resolution 69/217 (para. 18)[c]	1	Ongoing
2014 (Samoa Pathway)	Resolution 69/15 (paras. 101 and 119)	2	Ongoing

[10] See A/CONF.167/9, paras. 118, 119, 120, 128 and 135.

[11] Does not include repeated requests such as the annual production of reports of the Secretary-General.

Additional mandates			
Year	*Document*	*Number of additional mandates*	*Status*
2015–present	Resolution 70/202 (paras. 11 (a–c), 14 and 15)[d]	5	Ongoing
	Resolution 72/217 (para. 30)[e]	1	
Total		**37**	
Completed		**24**	
Ongoing		**13**	

[a] In paragraph 1 of the enclosure to Assembly resolution S-22/2, entitled "State of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States", the Assembly identified the following areas for priority action, including the means for their implementation, as requiring further focused attention: climate change, including climate variability and sea level rise; natural disasters; freshwater resources; coastal and marine resources; energy; and tourism.

[b] In the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the following additional priority areas for small island developing States were identified: graduation from least developed country status; trade; sustainable production and consumption; health; knowledge management; and culture.

[c] The Assembly added the monitoring of the Samoa Pathway to the work of the Secretariat.

[d] The Assembly added the mandates of supporting the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States, support for the high-level political forum for sustainable development and the linkage of the Sustainable Development Goals to the development agendas for small island developing States.

[e] The Assembly requested reporting on initiatives to strengthen coordination between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative.

C. Mandates of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Original mandates

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/227, established the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, with the objective of ensuring the effective implementation of the programmes of action for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

11. The General Assembly, by its resolutions 57/262 and 58/213, called upon the Office of the High Representative to support the preparatory process for and the organization of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In addition to the mandate with respect to advocacy and the mobilization of international support and resources, the High Represent itive was also designated the Secretary-General of the International Meeting, held in Port Louis in January 2005.

12. In the outcome document of the International Meeting, known as the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (see A/CONF.207/11 and A/CONF.207/11/Corr.1), the Secretary-General was requested to ensure that the Office of the High Representative continued to mobilize international support and resources for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, in accordance with its mandate.

New and expanded mandates

13. Over the years, the small island developing States mandate of the Office of the High Representative has grown and been shaped by the outcomes of major United Nations conferences on small island developing States and General Assembly resolutions.

14. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Assembly resolution 69/15, annex), which was adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in September 2014, further reflected growing expectations on the part of Member States with respect to the Secretariat's work on small island developing States. In paragraph 120 of the Samoa Pathway, the original mandate of the Office of the High Representative was expanded, pursuant its advocacy mandate, to include the mainstreaming of the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system, and the enhancement of the coherence of small island developing States issues in United Nations processes, including at the national, regional and global levels.

15. Furthermore, since 2015, the workload of the Office of the High Representative has increased substantially with the requirements to strengthen linkages between the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and that of other global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and other key priority areas for small island developing States.

16. The General Assembly, in its resolution 70/202, urged that effective linkages be made between the follow-up and review arrangements for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and those of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including the Samoa Pathway. As the custodians in the Secretariat of the global follow-up and review arrangements regarding small island developing States, the small island developing States units of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative are expected to provide substantive backstopping support in that regard. This was recognized by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, when it mandated the Office of the High Representative to build effective linkages between the follow-up and review arrangements for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, and the Samoa Pathway.

17. The General Assembly, in its resolution 70/202, requested the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative to support the work of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States in facilitating the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework, in accordance with the Samoa Pathway. By the same resolution, the Assembly decided that the Steering Committee was to meet on a regular basis, to support the follow-up of existing and promote and advocate the launch of new small island developing States partnerships, and requested the Secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee, to organize a global multi-stakeholder partnership dialogue on an annual basis.

18. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/217, called upon the two small island developing States units to continue to enhance the analytical and advocacy support for the work of the Steering Committee. By the same resolution, the General Assembly also reaffirmed the importance and progress made as part of

the initiative led by the Office of the High Representative to launch the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network, and the need for its continued coherence with the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework.

19. By its resolutions 71/225 and 72/217, the General Assembly also decided to convene a high-level review of the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, and that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative should organize, facilitate and provide the necessary support for the review process, including the convening of preparatory meetings of small island developing States in their respective regions, as well as an interregional meeting for all small island developing States.

20. After growing in scope and complexity, the original mandate of the Office of the High Representative — which covers aspects of advocacy pertaining to awareness-raising and consensus-building on small island developing States issues, along with resource mobilization — has now been expanded to four additional permanent workstreams. Those additional workstreams include: mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway and issues relating to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system; enhancing the coherence of small island developing States issues in United Nations processes at the national, regional and global levels; building linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway; and partnerships.

D. Work programme of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016–2017)

21. Since its establishment, the work programme of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been guided by two primary considerations, namely, the implementation of its core and additional mandates, and the overall alignment of the Unit with the core functions of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals. The latter ensures the equitable allocation of resources to the Unit to enable it to carry out its ever-expanding mandates. For the years 2016 and 2017, the Division focused on five core functions: (a) support for intergovernmental processes on sustainable development; (b) analysis and policy development; (c) capacity development at the country level; (d) inter-agency coordination; and (e) knowledge management, communication and outreach.[12] The Unit's work programme for that period was tailored to ensure the implementation of its core and additional mandates and to mirror the Division's core functions.

22. In implementing its work programmes, the Small Island Developing States Unit also utilizes the resources and expertise available in other branches and divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2016, JIU highlighted the percentage of time allocated to the work of the Unit by other branches of the Division as follows:[13]

Table 2

Level	*Branch*	*Time allocation to small island developing States issues (percentage)*
D-2	Director of Division	10
D-1	SIDS, Ocean and Climate Branch	20
P-5	Intergovernmental Support and Inter-agency Branch	5

[12] See JIU/REP/2016/3, para. 14.

[13] Ibid., para. 26.

Level	*Branch*	*Time allocation to small island developing States issues (percentage)*
P-5	Outreach and Communication Branch	5
P-4	Outreach and Communication Branch	33

23. However, despite the provision of extra intradivisional support, the three Professional-level staff members in the Unit have all indicated that they have had to use additional time outside normal working hours in order to fully meet their deliverables, in particular to provide Secretariat support and to prepare mandated parliamentary documentation, including with regard to monitoring progress made in implementing the sustainable development priorities of small island developing States.

24. The full staff complement of the Small Island Developing States Unit was attained in January 2017 following the recruitment of the current Chief of Unit at the P-5 level. The assessment in the present section of the Unit's work programme and the impact of staffing on overall implementation covers the years 2016 and 2017. The work programme of the Unit for 2017 is presented in table 3 below.[14]

Table 3

Work Programme of the Small Island Developing States Unit, 2017

Output 1	**Support to United Nations intergovernmental processes**	**Responsibility (number of staff at each level)**
	United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14	
1.1	Conference support	P-5 (1), P-4 (1), P-2 (1), General Service (2)
1.2	Organization of and support for an expert group meeting on oceans for small island developing States (Jeju, Republic of Korea)	P-5 (1), General Service (1)
	High-level political forum for sustainable development	
1.3	Organization of and support for a formal session on small island developing States	P-4 (1), P-3 (1)
1.4	Organization of and support for a small island developing States initiative (with cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Singapore) — side event in the margin of high-level political forum	P-5 (1), P-4 (1), General Service (1)
	Support to legislative and resolution processes in the General Assembly	
1.5	Parliamentary documentation: Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway	P-5 (1), P-4 (1), P-2 (1)
1.6	Preparation and Secretariat support to the negotiation of the annual Assembly resolution on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway	P-4 (1), P-2 (1)
1.7	Support for BBNJ and ocean and sea issues	P-5 (1)

[14] For further information on the work programme of the Unit and an analysis of the Unit's work output, please see https://sidsnetwork.org/work-program/.

	Secretariat services	
1.8	Internal correspondence: drafting of third party notes, statements, briefing papers, talking points and background notes	P-5 (1), P-4 (1)
Output 2	**Capacity-building initiatives and support for voluntary national reviews**	
	Support for the voluntary national review process	
2.1	Support for Belize and Maldives	P-5 (1), P-4 (1)
	Capacity development account projects	
2.2	**Vulnerability-resilience country profile project** National training workshops: Guinea-Bissau, Saint Lucia and Seychelles	P-4 (1), P-2 (1), General Service (1)
	Technical advisory services	
2.3	**Vulnerability-resilience country profile project** Provision for technical advisory services to Barbados, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Sao Tome and Principe, Saint Lucia and Seychelles	P-4 (1)
2.4	Technical advisory assistance and support for the presidency of Fiji of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	P-5 (1)
	Regional workshops (vulnerability-resilience country profile project)	
2.5	Regional workshop for small island developing States of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean and South China Seas	P-4 (1)
2.6	Regional workshop for the Caribbean	P-4 (1)
Output 3	**Inter-agency coordination and thematic issues coordination**	
3.1	Chair of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States (held on a rotating basis with the Office of the High Representative)	P-5 (1)
3.2	United Nations coordination on oceans issues	P-5 (1)
3.3	Coordination by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States	P-4 (1), P-2 (1)
3.4	Climate change:	
	• Side event at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	P-5 (1)
	• Breakfast event during the high-level segment of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly	P-5 (1), P-4 (1), P-2 (1), General Service (2)
3.5	Disaster risk reduction — small island developing States side event: participation in the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction	P-5 (1)
Output 4	**Stakeholder engagement and small island developing State partnerships**	
4.1	Engagement with:	P-5 (1), P-4 (1)
	• Alliance of Small Island States	

	• Pacific small island developing States	
	• Caribbean small island developing States	
	• Small island developing States of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean and South China Seas	
4.2	Secretariat support for the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States:	P-5 (1), P-4 (1)
	• Official and ambassadorial meetings	
	• Global multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue	
Output 5	**Communication and outreach**	
5.1	Quarterly publication: "The Cowrie: SIDS Times Magazine"	P-2 (1), General Service (1)
5.2	Updates to and maintenance of the small island developing States network website	General Service (1)
5.3	Digital, social media and liaison with the information technology support services of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals	General Service (1)

E. Programme of work of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (2016–2017)

25. The workload of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States increased significantly over the biennium 2016–2017 owing to the additional mandates articulated above. Despite no subsequent increase in resources, the Small Island Developing States Unit continued to deliver on its original mandate, which encompasses advocacy pertaining to awareness-raising, consensus-building and resource mobilization, and initiated activities pertaining to additional mandates the Unit had been entrusted with, in particular mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system; enhancing the coherence of such issues in United Nations processes at the national, regional and global levels; and partnerships. While the Unit has taken some initial steps in implementing the above-mentioned additional responsibilities, significant gaps remain in covering the full extent of the expanded mandates.

Advocacy pertaining to awareness-raising and consensus-building

26. In relation to the implementation of its advocacy mandate, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative has generated a series of targeted background documents, briefing notes, booklets and think pieces to serve as advocacy tools, and utilized various platforms to disseminate information to various stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. In addition, the Unit

convened and participated in 20 events specific to small island developing States in pursuit of its advocacy mandate over the biennium 2016–2017.

27. In addition, as part of its advocacy efforts, in October 2016, the Office of the High Representative facilitated a dialogue between the permanent missions of small island developing States to the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The dialogue was centred on IMF work in promoting resilience-building in small States, in particular with respect to natural disasters and climate change.

28. Furthermore, the Unit also used the convening power of the High Representative to lend voice to the concerns and needs of small island developing States on the global stage, including in regional and global conferences such as the twenty-second and twenty-third sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the World Urban Forum, the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, and the World Forum on Local Economic Development. Whenever needed, the High Representative has issued think pieces, articles and op-eds, by which she has further sensitized the global community regarding what is at stake for small island developing States and called for action. As a member of the Senior Management Group, the Sustainable Energy for All Advisory Board, UN-Oceans, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, the High Representative advocates for the interests of small island developing States and other vulnerable countries in those forums. The High Representative, as one of the four champions for national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and one of the two global champions for statistical development under the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, has also highlighted the peculiar challenges and needs of small island developing States in those areas.

Mobilization of international support and resources for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway

29. Through active engagement with a number of development partners and other major stakeholders, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative has supported resource mobilization for the implementation of critical parts of the Samoa Pathway and for Unit activities that benefit small island developing States.

30. The Office of the High Representative is now a full-fledged participant in the World Bank Group-organized Small States Forum. The Forum has established itself as an important platform for advocacy, sharing best practices and exploring new solutions, all in support of a more coherent international response to the special development challenges of small States, most of which are small island developing States. The Office also contributed to Forum events held in the margins of the World Bank Group's Annual Meetings in 2016 and its Spring Meetings in 2017. In the context of the Small States Forum, the Office has been included in the World Bank Group-led working group that is discussing the potential design of vulnerability metrics that could serve as criteria for the allocation of concessional financing. The membership of the Office in that working group attests to its increasing credibility and visibility and its growing recognition as the voice of small island developing States.

31. With respect to resource mobilization to fund activities that benefit small island developing States, one such example is the joint efforts of the two small Island Developing States units to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to fund preparations for the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway, for which no regular resources have been

provided. Those resources will ensure the participation of small island developing States representatives in the preparatory meetings and in the one-day high-level meeting, along with covering other related costs.

32. Also, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative has raised extrabudgetary resources to enable the Office to fund other critical activities of the Unit, including regional meetings of the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network, the participation of representatives of small island developing States from the Pacific in the Asia-Pacific meeting of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development held in Vanuatu in October 2017, visits by the Bureau of the Alliance of Small Island States (together with a number of small island developing States) to Washington for dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and retreats for permanent representatives of small island developing States.

Mainstreaming of the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States

33. The Office of the High Representative took preliminary steps in carrying out this additional mandate by, inter alia, assuming the role of co-convener of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States. Comprising representatives of the United Nations and other international organizations, the Group is expected to help to monitor support extended by its members to the implementation of the Samoa Pathway. The Group could also be used to mount and deliver coordinated and coherent United Nations support for sustainable development in small island developing States.

Ensuring coherence of small island developing States issues in United Nations processes at the national, regional and global levels

34. The most significant undertaking for the Office of the High Representative in response to this additional mandate has been the establishment of a national focal points mechanism. The proposal to establish a network of national focal points in small island developing States originated in a workshop on the theme "Enhancing the coherence of small island developing States issues in United Nations processes post-Samoa Pathway", held in New York in November 2015. It was later conceptualized in one of the recommendations of the internal audit report on the Office of the High Representative issued by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The national focal points network is expected to act as a vital link across the global and national levels and to facilitate coordination, information-sharing and planning of Samoa Pathway implementation.

Forging partnerships

35. Following the Private Sector Partnership Forum, held in Apia in 2014, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative successfully mobilized resources to begin a project entitled "Support to the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) and website". The main objective of the project has been to support the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network in transitioning into a fully operational phase during which it will gain high-profile visibility and add value to the private sector in small island developing States.

36. In March 2016, the Office of the High Representative partnered with the Netherlands and Aruba to convene the Aruba Public-Private Partnerships Conference. Over the course of three days, the Conference focused on the role of public-private partnerships in promoting sustainable growth in small island developing States. The Small Island Developing States Global Business Network was launched at that event.

37. An independent evaluation of a project of the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network that was completed in July 2018 indicated some 50 concrete partnerships had been developed. Those partnerships have all been featured on the Network's website. In the evaluation report, it was also underscored that the Network had added significant value to the knowledge of and awareness among United Nations partner agencies, and led to their acknowledgement of the relevance of addressing the broad and emerging concepts such as sustainable development, cross-sector partnerships, shared value and collaborative capacities, which provided for rich and deep discussions and learning among members of the Network. Recommendations were also set out in the evaluation report with respect to the project's continuation to a second phase, for which extrabudgetary resources would need to be mobilized.

38. The partnerships between the Office of the High Representative and other stakeholders, including the United Nations system, the World Bank Group, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and regional banks have also strengthened markedly. For instance, outreach efforts to the Development Assistance Committee on development effectiveness, to WTO on trade issues, and to regional banks and organizations on transport issues have all contributed to the greater reflection of the priorities and concerns of small island developing States in their respective deliberations.

III. Allocation of resources

A. Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Human resources

39. At its inception, the staff of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs consisted of two established posts: (a) the Chief of Unit (P-5); and (b) a Sustainable Development Officer (P-4). The Secretariat has since taken measures to strengthen the Unit through the deployment of additional established posts: (a) an Associate Sustainable Development Officer (P-2); (b) a Website Assistant (G-6); and (c) a General Service staff member (G-5) (see A/62/945, para. 12). A Sustainable Development Officer (P-4) position was requested in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2008–2009 (see Assembly resolution 58/213, para. 13). In addition, extrabudgetary resources were secured with the support of the Government of Greece to provide for an Interregional Adviser (L-4) for a period of one year (see A/62/945, para. 12). An Associate Expert was later assigned to the Unit for two years, with the support of the Government of Italy, in 2008 (see ibid.). The current staff configuration of the Unit remains at five, with three staff members at the Professional-level (one each at the P-5, P-4, P-2 levels) and two staff members in the General Service category (one each at the G-6 and G-4 levels). The Unit continues to benefit from its interaction with the Division for Sustainable Development Goals.

Budgetary allocation

40. In successive resolutions, the General Assembly has repeatedly called upon the Secretary-General to provide the Small Island Development States Unit in the Department for Economic and Social Affairs with adequate, stable and predictable funding to facilitate the full and effective implementation of its mandates in accordance with the priority accorded to it and in view of the demand for its services, in particular with respect to the provision of assistance and support for small island developing States (see table 4 below).

Table 4

Year	*Assembly resolution*	*Paragraph(s)*
1995	50/116	9
1996	51/183	2
1997	52/202	9
2000	55/202	9
2001	56/198	8
2003	58/213	24
2004	59/229	7
2005	60/194	7
2006	61/196	7
2007	62/191	7
2008	63/213	14, 15
2009	64/199	20, 21
2010	65/156	8
2014	69/15, annex	119

41. During the biennium 2016–2017, a sum of $18,291,300, reflecting a decrease of $2,589,100, was allotted to the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, with $17,390,000 for posts and $901,300 for non-post requirements, including other staff costs, consultants, experts, travel of staff, contractual services, supplies and materials and furniture and equipment. The decrease in post resources resulted from the abolishment of one P-5 post, in line with Assembly resolution 69/264, which was offset in part by the establishment of one P-4 post in the Small Island Developing States Unit for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway. The decrease in non-post resources reflected: (a) the removal of non-recurrent requirements related to the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the support for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, pursuant to Assembly resolutions 66/288 and 67/207, respectively; and (b) further reductions in staff travel expenses that took into account the impact of the standards of accommodation for air travel, in line with Assembly resolution 69/274A.

42. During the same period, extrabudgetary resources of $1,565,000 were used: (a) to support the participation of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in a range of meetings related to sustainable development and intergovernmental meetings; (b) to support analytical and technical cooperation work programmes related to energy and water; and (c) to support activities relating to the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), including the Samoa Pathway among others. The funding for the Unit's capacity-building and vulnerability-resilience projects has been exhausted, thereby risking the non-continuance of those initiatives.

43. In 2016, JIU conducted a thorough assessment of the level of resources allocated by the Secretariat over a seven-biennium period (2006–2017) and concluded that

"resources have remained stable over a period in which the mandates have significantly expanded through successive resolutions resulting in additional tasks" (see JIU/REP/2016/3, para. 23).

B. Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative

Human Resources

44. The initial staff allocation in 2006 for the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative covered only one staff member at the P-2 level. An additional P-4 post was approved in 2010. Over the past several years, the operational capacity of the Small Island Developing States Unit has been strengthened through non-recurrent provisions, in order to ensure the timely delivery on the Office's responsibilities in line with its expanding mandates. For the biennium 2014–2015, resources from the general temporary assistance budget were used against a P-3 post (currently discontinued) to support the preparations for and the holding of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, in Samoa.[15] No extrabudgetary funding for Professional-level staff posts was available during the period, despite the expanded mandate resulting from the Samoa Pathway (see resolution 69/15, annex, para. 120). While the Office of the High Representative had anticipated that commensurate regular resources would be allocated to cover the additional tasks, there has been no such increase. In contrast, an analysis of budget documents has revealed that, after the fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2011, the mandate of the Office of the High Representative was expanded to service the needs of the least developed country special category, and eight Professional-level staff posts were created (three P-5, three P-4 and two P-3 posts), along with one General Service post. No increase in resources has been approved following the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States for the small island developing State units of either the Office of the High Representative or in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Budgetary allocation

45. For the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative, the provision of resources allocated to staff costs (at the P-4 and P-2 levels) account for more than 95 per cent of its total regular budget resources. The resources that are available for programmatic work — including expert group meetings and travel to attend major regional and global meetings relevant to small island developing States — have been marginal, accounting for less than 5 per cent. Because of very limited resources available for programmatic work, the Unit has relied heavily on extrabudgetary resources to deliver on its mandate. Without sufficient resources earmarked for work relating to small island developing States, the Office of the High Representative has used unearmarked resources from its general trust fund to narrow the funding gap and to support its activities and projects related to small island developing States. However, the level of funds available has proved to be insufficient to cover the increasing level of activities. The Office of the High Representative has also received support from one Government to fund the travel of private-sector representatives to attend the Private Sector Partnerships Forum, held in Samoa in 2014. The heavy reliance on extrabudgetary resources, which prove to be volatile, poses a risk for the delivery of planned activities.

[15] See JIU/REP/2016/3. Based on information provided by the Secretariat in February 2016.

IV. Assessment of gaps and needs

A. Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

46. All current staff members of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs assumed their roles after the adoption of the Samoa Pathway. The additional mandates highlighted above became part of their inherited undertakings and, accordingly, they have been tailoring the work programme of the Unit to meet those increased demands.

47. Through an analysis of the Unit's mandates and of the alignment of its work programme, outputs and deliverables, it was established that there were aspects of the pre-existing and newly added mandates that were not being met sufficiently by the Unit, a situation that was directly attributable to the inadequate and insufficient provision of resources. With adequate resources, the Unit could further enhance its work in the areas of research, technical analysis and monitoring the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Samoa Pathway, as well as strengthen its support for small island developing States partnerships and its inter-agency collaboration. Meeting those needs, however, requires greater engagement with stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels, which cannot be handled effectively with the current resource allocation and staff complement. During the analysis, it was also established that additional work and increased resources were required in order for the Unit to adequately and meaningfully contribute to the overall efforts of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in the area of policy development.

48. In relation to the Unit's additional responsibilities in supporting the high-level political forum and ensuring effective linkages between the follow-up and review arrangements for the 2030 Agenda, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals is now focused on supporting Member States in preparing their voluntary national reviews along with building capacity for integrated planning and policy design, and on establishing links to national planning processes in key sectors, as appropriate. The increased provision of resources would allow the Unit to contribute effectively to the Division's efforts to inform intergovernmental bodies regarding the relevance and impact of its normative and analytical efforts at the national, regional and global levels. It would also allow the Unit to enhance its efforts to build the capacity of small island developing States with respect to preparing voluntary national reviews, including through workshops and seminars.

49. In terms of expertise, the capacity of the Unit needs to be further enhanced in the areas of analytical research, project management, policy development and planning. The allocation of additional resources would bridge the gaps that currently exist and would contribute to the further enhancement of the Unit's delivery on its core and additional mandates in supporting the sustainable development of small island developing States.

B. Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative

50. Contrasting the scope of the initial and additional mandates of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative with its resources, in particular given that it has only two staff members and very few resources that are allocated for non-post purposes, it is clear that it is under-resourced. Indeed, even as the Unit was tasked with additional responsibilities after 2014, its resources began to

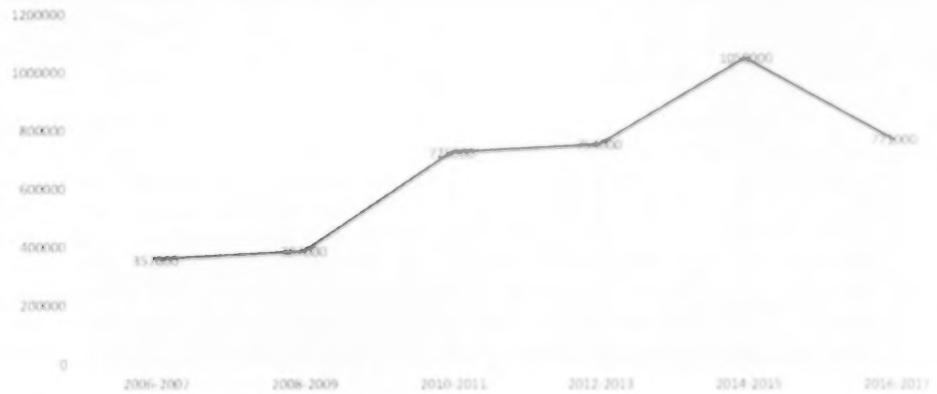
decline (see figure I). To ease the mismatch between expanded mandates and declining or, at best, stagnant resources, and to ensure the fulfilment of its mandate, the Office of the High Representative had to rely on the temporary reassignment of resources from other parts of the Office to the Small Island Developing States Unit and the use of the general temporary assistance resources, even though such arrangements are not sustainable in the long term. While those temporary internal arrangements enabled the Unit to carry its initial mandated functions of awareness-raising, consensus-building and resource mobilization and to initiate some activities related to the additional mandates in relation to small island developing States, the net gains resulting from those arrangements have been far less than what is required of the Unit to adequately carry out the additional mandates conferred upon it by Member States.

51. As a consequence, gaps remain in doing the following: (a) mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system; (b) enhancing the coherence of small island developing States issues at the national, regional and global levels; (c) building linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway; and (d) forging strong partnerships.

Figure

Cost of staff in the Professional and higher categories in the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative: regular budget (2006–2015) and approved budget (2016–2017)

(United States dollars)



C. Mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system

52. The Office of the High Representative has initiated a number of activities in response to the mandate pertaining to mainstreaming issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system. Some steps have been taken to strengthen the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, including the adoption of the Group's terms of reference. Meetings of the Group have also been convened more periodically, with the two small island developing States units alternating the chairing of those meetings and fulfilling their complementary functions.

53. As a central platform for strengthening cooperation and coordination regarding activities related to small island developing States within the United Nations system and beyond, the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States

needs to be further strengthened and should be institutionalized. Doing so would require convening additional meetings at both the principal and working levels, as well as in the margins of high-level meetings, in order to raise the profile of the Group, and having a more targeted approach to particular areas of support. It also implies using the Group as a platform to design and stage coordinated and coherent United Nations support for sustainable development in small island developing States. On a logistical level, the strengthening of the Group also demands that new organizational tools, including online tools, be created and maintained in order to facilitate continued engagement.

54. Engagement with other United Nations entities has been strong. The Office of the High Representative has organized joint events and maintained good interaction with United Nations system entities, including at the senior level. However, the support of the Office for the participation of small island developing States in the deliberations of the governing bodies of United Nations agencies has been lacking, owing to limited resources.

D. Coherence of small island developing States issues at the national, regional and global levels

55. An analysis of the Samoa Pathway determined that 65 United Nations processes were either explicitly mentioned in the Pathway or were implied by actions that were called for therein.[16] Achieving coherence at the national, regional and global levels requires adopting institutional innovations, in particular establishing national focal points in small island developing States, and leveraging existing or reformed frameworks, including through the creation of strong linkages with the revigorated resident coordinator system and with prominent regional and global actors.

56. While the process of designating national focal points in small island developing States has begun, with the identification of focal points ongoing and the corresponding action plan having been finalized, the network of national focal points has not yet been operationalized, owing to a lack of dedicated resources to fund and service the activities of the network. The Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative will need to organize and support the annual meetings of the network along with ad hoc regional meetings. It will also need to support the participation of the focal points in other regional and international meetings related to small island developing States with respect to the range of priority areas under the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is important to note that the first annual meeting of national focal points of small island developing States was scheduled to be held in the margins of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018. However, owing to the heavy reliance on extrabudgetary resources, and the inability to mobilize the necessary funding in time, that initiative, which is vital for the delivery of the mandate on strengthening coherence, had to be postponed indefinitely. There is a critical need to bridge such gaps in a more predictable and sustainable manner.

[16] Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, "Report of the expert group meeting on enhancing the coherence of SIDS issues in UN processes post SAMOA Pathway and in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda". Available at http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/07/Report_EGM_Coherence-of-SIDS-Issues-in-UNProcesses.pdf.

57. The engagement of the Office of the High Representative with United Nations resident coordinators and country teams has been minimal because of limited resources. Instances of collaboration include a letter jointly issued by the Office and the United Nations Development Programme following the adoption of the Samoa Pathway, in which country teams were invited to support small island developing States in mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway into national development plans and strategies. Another example is the occasional meetings between the senior management of the Office and country teams during visits to small island developing States.

58. The active participation of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative in regional and global processes has also been constrained, owing to a lack of resources for programmatic work, in particular for expert group meetings and travel.

E. Building linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway

59. Some three years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, increased support is needed in providing substantive backstopping support for intergovernmental negotiations. Both small island developing States units will need to provide more structured and targeted support in order to ensure increased coordination within the Alliance of Small Island States and increased engagement in the context of intergovernmental deliberations on the 2030 Agenda and other global frameworks. Along with their complementary functions, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will conduct research and policy analysis, the outcomes of which will be used by the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative to extend substantive backstopping to the consultation processes of the Alliance of Small Island States and its participation in intergovernmental negotiations. In addition, in keeping with their respective complementary mandates, both small island developing States units are also expected to be active in all major United Nations working groups and task forces that have been established to assist United Nations governing bodies in their deliberations on the 2030 Agenda and other global frameworks. The Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will prepare small island developing States-related inputs, whereas the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative will stage advocacy campaigns that build on the outcomes of the work of those working groups and tasks forces as it relates to small island developing States.

F. Forging strong partnerships

60. As discussed earlier, the small island development States units have been instrumental in mobilizing a larger number of stakeholders, including development partners, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and foundations, to ensure that small island developing States are supported in creating integrated and tailored solutions aimed at building resilience and achieving sustainable development in line with their own specific circumstances. However, with regard to building partnerships, more work is needed in providing structured, continuous and substantive support for the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States and the annual global multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue. Doing so will require channelling regular resources that are dedicated to enhancing advocacy and providing substantive backstopping support, including in the preparation of background documentation to inform the deliberations and the outcomes of those forums, as well as to providing effective follow-up, analysis and monitoring and review of the partnerships that are formed.

V. Conclusion

61. Small island developing States constitute a distinct group of developing countries that face extreme vulnerability. Such vulnerability is due to a conjunction of factors, including their high exposure to climatic, environmental and economic shocks, long distances from major markets, and small populations and landmasses. In addition to their vulnerabilities, such countries also have limited capacities and means to embark on the path of resilient development. The sum of the above is that small island developing States require special support from the international community, as reiterated in the outcomes of successive United Nations conferences and other intergovernmental deliberations on small island developing States and on sustainable development. The expanding mandates of both small island developing States units are derived from those outcomes.

62. Although the responsibilities and functions of the two units have increased significantly in their scope and complexity, resources have not increased. Improvements to coordination between the two units at different levels, in planning and carrying out joint activities, and in leveraging resources available within their respective departments or offices have improved the implementation of their initial mandates and have enabled them to initiate some activities pertaining to additional functions. However, the full extent of those additional functions cannot be realized without corresponding increases in resources. Both small island developing States units have also taken concrete steps to enhance coordination in the area of resource mobilization, such as joint efforts to raise extrabudgetary resources for the midterm review preparatory process.

63. For the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, resource gaps and needs exist in the areas of research, policy development and technical analysis to enhance the Unit's efforts and capacity to ensure: (a) the monitoring of the mainstreaming by small island developing States of the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals into their national development frameworks; (b) the creation of effective linkages between the follow-up and review arrangements for the 2030 Agenda; and (c) the provision of support in preparing for the high-level political forum, including in building the capacity of small island developing States with respect to voluntary national reviews. Additional resources are also required to enhance the Unit's efforts in research, analysis, monitoring of and support for small island developing States partnership frameworks and to enhance its role in inter- and intra-agency collaboration.

64. For the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Office of the High Representative, the costs incurred by an increasing number of activities resulting from its original mandates and by initial steps taken to implement new and additional mandates have been predominantly financed from temporary provisions and extrabudgetary contributions. Without sufficient and sustainable resources, the Unit will not be able to fulfil all those mandates. Gaps persist with respect to mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway and issues related to small island developing States into the work of the United Nations system, and enhancing the coherence of small island developing States issues at the national, regional and global levels. The mismatch between mandates and resources is also evident with regard to: (a) partnerships, especially in providing substantive backstopping services to the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States and in activities relating to forging partnerships for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway; and (b) building linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway, including through the substantive backstopping of the consultation processes of the Alliance of Small Island States, its participation in intergovernmental negotiations

and its contribution to United Nations working groups and task forces that focused on the 2030 Agenda.

65. To leverage their complementary strengths in carrying out their annual workplans and related activities, the two units should continue to improve their coordination and collaboration, including through joint planning and implementation of activities. Those efforts could also involve other key partners in the United Nations system, so as to enhance implementation and the translation of global mandates relating to the sustainable development agenda at the national and regional levels. Such strengthened coordination would not require a structural change in the subprogrammes, but rather the enhanced and continuous exchange of information and medium-term planning to ensure the best use of allocated resources, with a view to fostering synergies and preventing duplication. The programme of activities could be shared, ex ante, with small island developing State representatives, possibly through the convening of retreats on a regular basis, to allow the representatives to assess their priorities and plan the delivery of support accordingly, with the participation of development partners.

66. Both units should also systematically monitor their activities to support small island developing States and the allocation of related resources, indicating the source (regular budget or extrabudgetary), the beneficiaries (small island developing States) and how the activities relate to the respective mandates of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative.

67. At this critical juncture in the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, the gaps identified above need to be bridged in order for the Secretariat to fulfil its mandate to support small island developing States. Taking note of the findings of the present needs assessment, the General Assembly may wish to address the needs resulting from the expanding mandates given to the two units in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, the reform of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway and the formulation of the programme budget for 2021.

68. It is also recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include in his report to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, under the agenda item on follow-up to and implementation of the Samoa Pathway, information on what has been done to address the needs resulting from the expanded mandates given to the small island developing States units in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative.